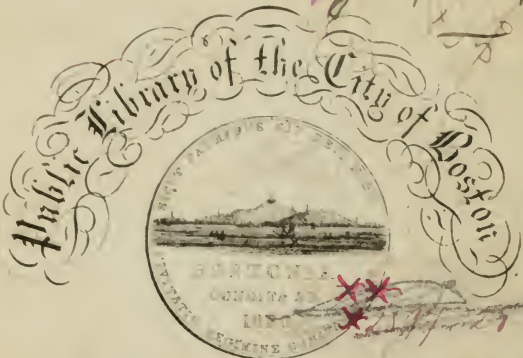


*Very scarce indeed. A. H. K.*

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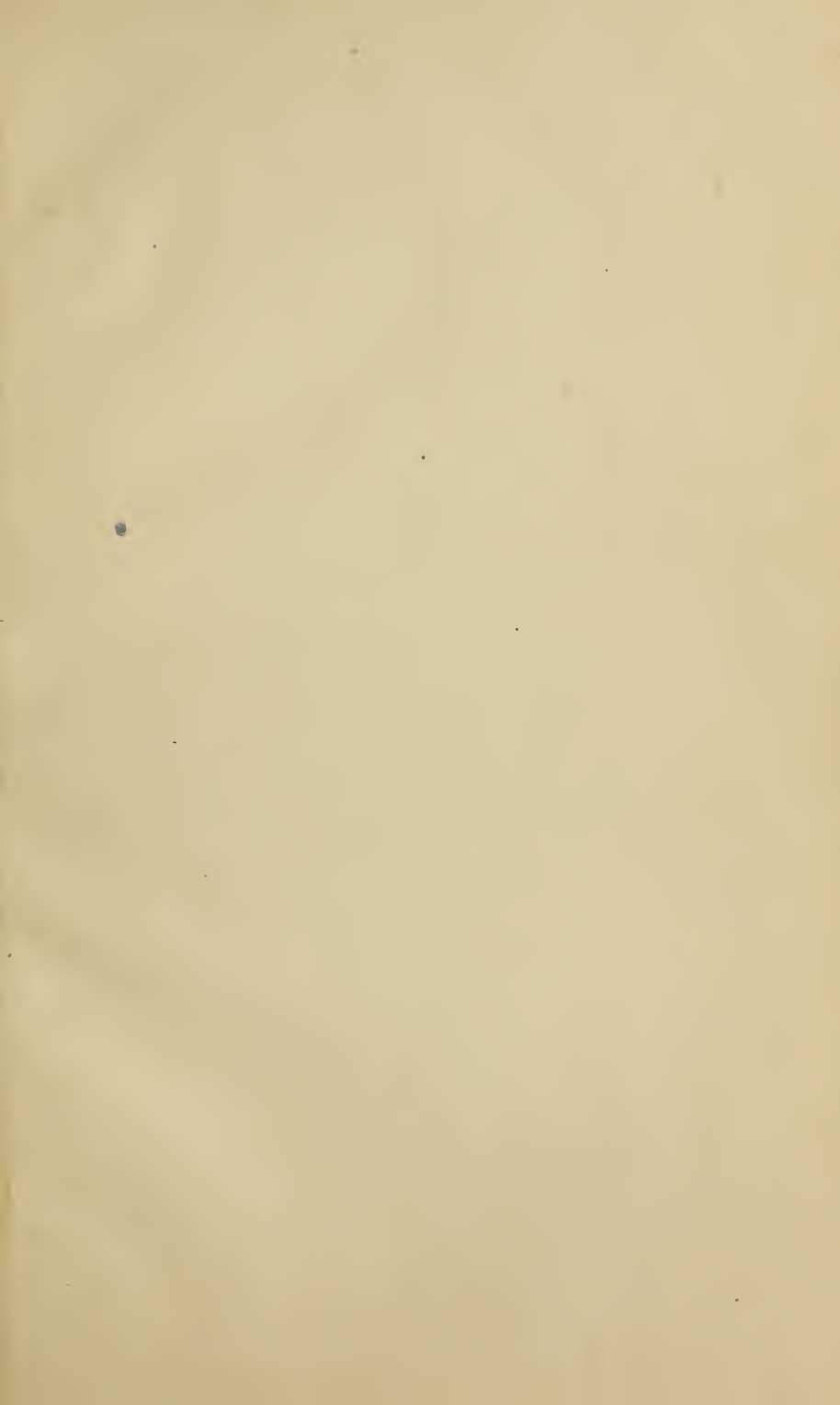


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AN

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AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SHAKSPERIAN  
MANUSCRIPTS, &c.

---

BY W. H. IRELAND.

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PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT,  
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Mar 15, 1856

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AN  
AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SHAKSPERIAN MANUSCRIPTS.

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IN Justice to the world, and to remove the odium under which my father labours, by publishing the manuscripts brought forward by me as *Shakspear's*, I think it necessary to give a true account of the business, hoping that whatever may occur in the following pages will meet with favor and forgiveness, when considered as the act of a boy.

My education is no otherwise material to the public, than to shew that the schools at *Kensington*, *Ealing*, *Soho-square*, and three years spent at *Amiens*, and the College of *Eu* in *Normandy*, were to qualify me for the law, and at the age of sixteen, I was articled to a gentleman of eminence in *New-Inn*.

My father having a taste for old and curious tracts, I imbibed a liking for the same pursuit, and attended much more to book-stalls, than to *Blackstone*, or *Coke* upon *Littleton*.

Frequently after dinner my father would read the different accounts of *Shakspear*, and say, it was wonderful, out of so many thousand lines which he must have wrote, that no vestige remained but his signature to the will in the *Commons*, and his name affixed to the mortgage deed presented by Mr. *Wallis* to Mr. *Garrick*; this was often repeated, and, with enthusiastic praises of *Shakspear*, my father would often say, that if there ever was a man inspired, *Shakspear* was that man.

Curiosity

Curiosity led me to look at the signatures publishing in *Stevens's Shakspear*, and it occurred to me, that if some old writing could be produced, and passed for *Shakspear's*, it might occasion a little mirth, and shew how far credulity would go in the search for antiquities

Having one day purchased a thin quarto tract of the time of *Elizabeth*, illuminated and bound in vellum, with her arms on the cover, I determined on trying an experiment with it, and for the purpose wrote a letter (in imitation of the hand of that period) as from the author of the book, making it the presentation copy from himself to the queen.

I wrote this epistle with common ink, weakened with water, but found its appearance too modern, notwithstanding I determined on shewing it; but before I went home from chambers, where it was contriv'd, I call'd on a book-binder in *New-Inn* passage, of the name of *Laurie*, and laughingly told him



him what I had contrived; then, producing the letter, I ask'd him his opinion? he told me it was well done, and might deceive many.

A young man working in the shop then said, he could give me a composition which would have much more the appearance of old ink; I begg'd he would, upon which he mix'd a few drops of acid with some other liquid (used in marbling the covers of books) in a vial; then writing a few words on paper, held it to the fire to shew its effect, when the letters turn'd completely brown. Having procured this, I went back to chambers, and re-wrote the letter, which I took home and shewed my father, who thought it genuine. This, and the book I exchanged with him for some other tract. It was the first thing of the kind I ever attempted, but after I had wrote a great quantity of the *Shakspear* manuscripts, I thought my first attempt, so badly executed, that I again got it from my father, and destroyed it, fearing a discovery.

Soon

Soon after my father went into the country, it being long vacation, I obtained permission of the gentleman with whom I was articled, to accompany him. The last place we visited before our return to town, was *Stratford* upon *Avon*, where we remained about ten days; during which time, my father made eager enquiries concerning *Shakspear*, but acquired little more knowledge than those who went before him.

We visited *Clopton House*, about a mile from *Stratford*, the gentleman who occupied it, behaved to us with much civility. On my father saying, he wished to know any thing relative to our *Bard*? the gentleman replied, that had he been there a few weeks sooner, he could have given him a great quantity of his, and his family's letters. My father, much astonished, begged to know what was become of them? The gentleman's answer was, that having some young partridges which he wished to bring up, he had, for the purpose, cleared out a small apartment wherein these papers lay, and burnt a large basket-full of them,

B 3

he



he said they were all rotten as tinder, but to many of them, he could plainly perceive the signature of *William Shakspear*; and turning to his wife, said to her, “ Don’t you remember it my Dear? ” Her answer was, “ Yes, perfectly well, and you know at the time, I blamed you for destroying them.” My father exclaimed, “ Good God, Sir! you do not know what an injury the world has sustained by the loss of them.” He then begged permission to see the Room, which the gentleman acquiesced in, adding, “ If there are any left Sir, you may have them, for they are but rubbish, and litter up the place.” Accordingly, we proceeded into the chamber, but found no trace of any papers; and in every other part of the house our search, proved equally ineffectual.

Having, by the many conversations which passed, imbibed my father’s enthusiasm for *Shakspear*, that led me not only to search, but also to attempt what I shall after relate.

We returned to town, I attended chambers as usual; two persons being at that time  
with

with me, one soon quitted the law, and *Foster Powell*, the well known *Pedestrian*, who was the other, shortly after died; I was then left alone, had it been otherwise, I should have found no opportunity of writing the papers.

My father would often lavish his usual praises on *Shakspear*, and frequently add, that he would give all his curious books to become possessed of a single line of his hand writing.

An idea having struck me, that I might perhaps be fortunate enough to find a signature of his, that induced me to examine a number of deeds and other papers which I met with in the course of my researches: I also carefully looked over many useless deeds at chambers, but without success.

For mere frolick and diversion, I soon after formed the plan of attempting to imitate his hand, and for that purpose copied out as nearly, as I could, the fac similes of his name to the will in the *Commons*, and to the mortgage deed, both of which are to

be found in *Steven's Shakspear* ; I also took down the heads of the deed, with which I went to chambers, and wrote the lease between *William Shakspear* and *John Heminges*, *Michael Frazer* and *Elizabeth* his wife, it is erroneous in many respects, and those who have seen it, may recollect it's inaccuracy, having stated, "*At the Globe by Thames.*" On telling this story to Mr. *Wallis*, he referred to the copy of the mortgage deed before-mentioned, from which he found I had nearly worded that of *Michael Frazer*, and laughingly said, " It was surprising how it should have escaped so many shrewd observers." I had before me a law paper of the time of King *James*, from which I took the style of writing, and afterwards affixed the names; it was wrote with the before-mentioned ink, which I had kept by me, but it's effect on parchment was different from that which it had on paper, only giving an appearance of common ink weakened with water. I wrote a deed in preference to any thing else, thinking it would more firmly stamp the signature as *Shakspear's*.

I took

I took it home and told my father I had something curious to shew him, on which I wished to have his opinion. After looking over the deed, he assured me, that he thought it genuine. I then begged his acceptance of it, upon which he offered me any of his curious books, I told him, I would receive nothing.

And here I must assure the world, that I had no intention whatever of attempting any thing further, my object was only to give my father pleasure, that wish accomplished, I was satisfied.

However, this deed was shewn, and was generally believed by those who saw it; several persons told me, that wherever it was found, there must undoubtedly be all the Manuscripts of *Shakspear* so long and vainly sought for; my father likewise said, he was certain that I knew of many more; thus urged, partly by the world, and my own vanity, I determined on attempting something further.

Having



Having seen *Shakspear's* father's *Profession of Faith*, I thought I would attempt to form one for the son, and as I heard him much censured for the invocation to the Saints, and the superstitious manner in which it was composed, I resolved on writing the son's perfectly simple, wishing thereby to prove *Shakspear* a Protestant, that having been often a matter of doubt.

I procured a blank sheet of old paper, being the outside leaf of several others, on which accounts had been kept, but not being then acquainted with the water marks of the time, I carefully chose leaves which had none at all, hearing many gentlemen say, if there were paper marks, they would go a great way to prove the manuscripts authentic: I made enquiries, and learn'd that the *Jugg* was most prevalent in that Day. Accordingly, in all the papers I afterwards produced, I obtained as many marked with the *Jugg* as I possibly could, those who have inspected the papers, must remember to have seen it frequently occur.

I wrote

I wrote the *Profession of Faith* without making a draft copy, placing before me the fac similes I had made, and forming every letter in his name as he might have written them, the rest were from my own imagination ; when compleated, I took it home, all who heard it read, admired the simplicity of the stile.

I was much questioned as to where it came from ? For some time I gave no particular answer, at length I found it necessary to say something, and for that purpose framed the following story !——

That I had, by mere chance, formed an acquaintance with a gentleman, and being one day at dinner with him, expressing my partiality for old books, as well as the autographs of great personages, I said, the gentleman appointed me to meet him, and told me I might rummage over a large quantity of old deeds and papers which had descended to him from his father, who had practised the law, and acquired a great fortune

fortune ; I added, that for some time I neglected calling according to my promise, alleging that as he was a young man, he had only meant perhaps to laugh at me ; however, one day being near the place, curiosity prompted me to call ; the gentleman, I said, was rather angry at my remissness and breach of promise, but having made an apology. he permitted me to go into the next room, where I saw a great quantity of papers tied up in bundles, having searched for some time, I at length found the deed before mentioned, which I took to the gentleman, who was much astonished, but said, since I promised you all you should find worthy your notice, I will not be worse than my word, then desiring me to make him a copy, he gave it me.

But when I had wrote more papers, the world wondered how any man could be weak enough to part with such a treasure ; to reconcile them to a belief of this, I added the following story ; that in searching among my friend's deeds, I had found one which ascertained to him some property, long a matter of litigation  
and



and dispute : upon this he promised me every thing I should find appertaining to *Shakspear*, and further, to stop all enquiries as to his name, &c. I added, that being a man of large fortune, he did not choose to undergo the impertinent questionings of the world, for which reason, he had bound me on oath, to secrecy, and the better to strengthen this, I hinted, that his father perhaps might have detained the papers illegally in the course of his practice, and should his name be known, it would undoubtedly lead to a discovery, and throw a slur on the honour of his family ; by such means, I for some time stopped all enquiries.

I shall now speak of Mr. *Talbot*, who has been so much talked of in the business, and explain the reasons. I had for some time known him, he was also placed with a gentleman of *New Inn*, but his articles expired before I attempted these Manuscripts ; he came frequently to chambers, and told me he was certain the deed which I had given my father was not original, but a production

duction of my own ; I must add that he well knew I had a facility at copying old hand writings, having often seen me do so before I wrote the manuscripts ; I firmly denied the charge, but a few days after, whilst I was busily employed at writing some of the papers which I afterwards gave my father, he came in so instantaneously that he caught me in the fact ; no longer able to deny the charge, I bound him to secrecy, alledging the anger of my father should he know the truth ; he promised never to betray me, nor can I say but that he behaved all through the business with the strictest honour and integrity.—He soon quitted *London* for *Dublin* ; on parting, I assured him that I would correspond and relate what occurred ; this is all Mr. *Talbot's* concern in the affair ; I have already mentioned how I procured the ink ; most of the old paper was purchased of a bookfeller of the name of *Verey*, in *Great May's Buildings, Saint Martin's Lane*, and the language I most solemnly declare to be all my own, no person having furnished me with a single idea.

I wrote

I wrote the letter to *Cowley*, thereby wishing to prove *Shakspear* a perfect good natured man; nothing was meant by the pen and ink drawing, however, the world said it was certainly some witty *conundrum*, as to their not being able to explain it, there is nothing surprising in that, for I myself do not know it's meaning. My reasons for writing *Heminge's* note and receipt I cannot at present recollect.—The letter to *Ann Hatherwaye*, his wife, was to shew his love for her, and that was also meant by the lines addressed to her; as for the lock of hair, it was more a childish frolic than any ways done to strengthen the authenticity of the papers.

Having heard of the Lord *Southampton's* bounty to *Shakspear*, I determined on writing the correspondence between them on that subject; but, on enquiry, could not learn that any signature of his Lordship's was in existence, I accordingly formed his mode of writing, merely from myself, and the better  
to

to disguise it from *Shakspear's*, I wrote the whole with my left hand ; this was done to give more authenticity to the story.

I may be faulty as to the exact time and order in which the different things were delivered to my father, but, having kept no account, I trust that will not go to disprove the truth of my present narration.

Amongst other gentlemen who came to view the manuscripts were Dr. *P——r*, and Dr. *W——n* ; I was in my father's study at the time they passed the highest encomiums on the style of the papers in general ; and I particularly well remember, after having heard read the *Profession of Faith*, one of them used the following words to my father, “ Mr. *Ireland*, we have very fine things in “ our *church service*, and our *litany* abounds “ with beauties, *but here is a man has dis-* “ *tanced us all.*” I scarce could refrain from laughter on hearing such praises lavished on myself, particularly on a composition not even studied when wrote, I was however  
struck



struck with astonishment at having attracted the applause of two such learned men, then I first began to think I had any abilities.

I wrote Queen *Elizabeth's* letter from her signature only, which I copied from an original in my father's possession, this letter was produced to make our *Bard* appear noticed by the greatest personage of his time, and thereby add, if possible, fresh lustre to his name.

At a broker's in *Butcher Row*, I one day saw hanging up for sale a coloured drawing, thinking it might serve my purpose, I purchased it, and went to chambers, where, having some water colours, I painted in the letters *W. S.* and the titles of the several plays, I likewise inserted in the corner, the arms of *Shakspear*, but was so unacquainted with them as to make the spear run the contrary way to what it really should do; on the back of this drawing was the figure of a *Dutchman*, this I altered to the character of *Shylock*, by painting in the knife and scales. What I conceive the  
c design

design originally to have represented was the contrast of a money getting old father, to a son squandering his property in gay apparel and dissipation; the drawing is certainly very old, but the writing, arms, scales knife, &c. were all added by myself.

Many persons having said, that if the original manuscript of one of his printed plays should be found, it would prove whether he wrote all the ribaldry attributed to him in the first quarto's.—That lead me to write over in the old hand the Tragedy of *King Lear*, and make alterations where I thought the lines beneath him, one of these I shall quote. After *Lear's* death, the Duke offers *Kent* his services, which he refuses: in all the printed copies *Kent* repeats the following couplet so much ridiculed.

*Kent*—I have a journey, Sir, shortly to go,  
My master calls, and I must not say no.

In lieu of which I inserted the following lines.—

“ Thanks,

“ Thanks, Sir, but I go to that unknown land,  
 “ That chains each pilgrim fast within it’s soil,  
 “ By living men most shunned most dreaded,  
 “ Still my good master this same journey took,  
 “ He calls me, I am content, and straight obey;  
 “ Then farewell world, the busy scene is done,  
 “ *Kent* lived most true, *Kent* dies most like a  
 “ man.”

By such alterations the world supposed that all the ribaldry in his other plays was not written by himself but foistered in by the players and printers, herein it cannot be said I injured the reputation of *Shakspear*, on the contrary, the world thought him a much more pure and even writer than before.

To prove the papers still more genuine, I wrote the agreements between *Lorwin* and *Condell* the players. I also produced the play house receipts, and other accounts, thereby to prove *Shakspear* correct in matters of the most trivial nature.—Among these were the receipts for playing before Lord *Leicester*, the sum there mentioned was very



high for that period : By this I meant to shew the esteem in which his company was held before all others, for I knew there were at that time several play houses in *London*. The strings with which I tied the bundles were unravelled from a piece of old tapestry, part of which I left in the hands of Mr. *Wallis*, about the same time I entrusted him with the secret.

My ink now failed me, I applied a second time to the book binder's man, and obtained a larger vial full, the remains of which I have also given to Mr. *Wallis* : thus I continued, and finding so many join in my father's belief, I thought with *Richard*,—

“ *The work went bravely on.* ”

At length I determined on writing a play, and having often observed a drawing of my father's from a design of *Mortimer's*, on the subject of *Rowena* presenting wine to *Vortigern*, I thought this story might perhaps  
serve,

serve, and accordingly refer'd to *Holinshed's* Chronicle, which my father had; this I did when no one was present, finding it applicable to my purpose, I plan'd the story of the play, which I afterwards produced: it consists of more than two thousand lines.—When asked for the originals, I made answer, that my friend would not deliver them till I had transcribed the whole; thus I gained time to compose and write the play in the old hand; At the time of it's completion, I was about nineteen years of age, the world praised many parts, but said it was uneven, having the same errors as are usually found in many of *Shakspear's* plays, it was generally thought superiour to the worst of his plays, and much inferior to his capital one's; I heard and smiled at these remarks, not a little surpris'd that I could at so young an age at all imitate him.

When Mr. *Talbot* heard of the play in *Ireland* he coolly wrote, informing me of his surpris'e that I had not let him into this secret, for to

ſpeak the truth, I had long neglected correſponding according to my promiſe, having to compoſe and write all the before mentioned things; I ſent him word I had attempted and wrote the play; after this we correſponded regularly, and I always ſpoke freely on the ſubject of the manuſcripts

I wrote a few leaves of *Hamlet*, with trivial alteration, as I had done in *Lear*, I likewiſe finiſhed other receipts, and executed a coloured head of *Shakſpear* on parchment, round which I affixed the names of ſeveral players of that day; I acquired this knowledge by looking into the folio edition of his plays.

As it was the general opinion, that if a deſcendant of *Shakſpear*'s could be found, he might claim the papers, I determined on proving that a friendſhip had ſubſiſted between our *Bard* and ſome perſon of the name of *Ireland*; for that purpoſe I wrote the deed of gift, and formed the ſtory of his ſaving *Shakſpear* from “drowning,” as I thought  
that

that the best method of accounting for their great friendship, and the bequests made to him by *Shakspear*. I also wrote the tributary lines, and made the drawings of *Ireland's* house; and to stop all claims whatever to the papers, I said, that my friend told me, they originally belonged to one of our ancestors, and that he had given them to me as a matter of right

My reason for appearing so much in public, was to make the world think me a giddy thoughtless young man, incapable of producing the papers.

Mr. *Talbot* came to *England* and was much astonished at the variety of things I had wrote; we destroyed mutually all our letters on the subject, and agreed, for the future, never to speak openly on the business

As the world began to doubt, I begged him to become a party in the story, he with much hesitation consented. I then informed my father, that Mr. *Talbot* was also concerned,

upon which he desired his account of the manuscripts, but Mr. T. not knowing the story he should tell, and fearing to contradict what I might have said before, informed my father that he would, in a few days, send a written account of the whole business. To this my father very reluctantly agreed; and previous to Mr. T. leaving town, we planned the story which we afterwards sent.

I continued as usual producing papers of different kinds, partly to add to the mass which I thought would strengthen their authenticity, and partly because the world did not altogether doubt them, and that I found them still praised by the *Literati*. I also wrote manuscript notes on books to about the number of fifty, all which I gave to my father.

Not owing to himself only, but frequently urged by other gentlemen, my father determined on publishing the papers; I begged he would desist, he made answer, that the world should not be deprived of such a treasure; at length,



length, afraid to tell this narrative, which he would not have believed, and not knowing what step to take, I one day, as my last effort, assured him, that if he was bent on publishing the papers it must be done at his own risk, for that my friend would have nothing to do in the business; he gladly replied, that he would take upon himself, thus, finding it impossible to stop him, I was compelled to suffer the publishing of the papers.

I wrote the deed of trust to *John Hemings*, distantly hinting, that the gentleman who gave the Manuscripts was a descendant of his, and that his ancestor had not fulfilled the bequests mentioned in that deed, but kept them to himself; this I alledged was cause sufficient for the concealment of his name. Had I not been urged to write this Pamphlet, I should have composed the Interlude of the *Virgin Queen*, and the play of *King Henry the Seventh*, mentioned in the deed of trust

The play of *Vortigern* was then agreed for, and with much delay brought forward; the  
world

world condemned it, but that did not lessen the satisfaction I felt in having at so early an age wrote a piece which was not only acted, but brought forth as the work of the greatest of men.

Mr. *Malone's* very tedious epistle then appeared, the *forgery*, he says is weak, and poorly contrived, why then should he bestow so much time and labour, and dive into antiquities, or search registers of births, marriages, deaths, &c. and spin out an Epistle to Lord *Charlemont* of upwards of four hundred pages, to prove, what as he says, was visible to the meanest capacity, but most of the time he was confessedly in a dream.

I wrote the play of King *Henry* the Second, of which I only executed three leaves in the old hand, now in my father's possession; it was thought by many superior to *Vortigern*.

At length the world in general accused my father of being a party concerned in writing  
the



the papers, and then I first began to feel uneasy.

Mr. *Talbot's* letter, I must here mention, came to hand, containing the story which we had agreed to tell, and I soon after received one part of which I have here transcribed, as it goes to prove myself alone author of the manuscripts.

6th January, 1796.

Dear *Sam*,

“ It is now a month, I believe, since I  
 “ wrote to your father a particular account  
 “ of the discovery of *Vortigern*, with every  
 “ thing that has passed before and since the  
 “ the fortunate finding it at *H———'s*; I  
 “ wrote by the same post to yourself, begged  
 “ you to shew *H———* the letter I wrote  
 “ your father, and keep a copy yourself; now  
 “ I think it rather hard I am not favoured  
 “ with an answer, and that my particular  
 “ request is not complied with.—I asked for  
 “ a copy of *Vortigern* and *Rowena*, as cur-  
 “ tailed

“tailed for representation; now, *Sam*, though  
 “you neglect me so much as to with-hold  
 “the copy of the play, which you know  
 “when in *London* I had not time to read,  
 “and which you may naturally suppose I  
 “would wish to know almost as I would  
 “all *Shakspear’s* works, yet mark how I am  
 “situated. and then you will not blame me  
 “for renewing my request; every one knows  
 “here the concern I have with *Vortigern*  
 “and *Rorwena*, and every one asks for the par-  
 “ticulars; I then show the copy of the letter  
 “sent your father; but when I am asked as to  
 “the play, and its merits, plot, beauties, &c.  
 “*I know nothing*. It is much wondered at  
 “that I can give no account of its coming  
 “out; some ask me if I have not in my  
 “own possession any scrap of the writings of  
 “*Shakspear*.—So, *Sam*, I request you will  
 “send me some bill, receipt, or letter of  
 “his, &c. &c.”

By this part of Mr. *Talbot’s* letter, I mean  
 to prove that he knew nothing of the play of  
*Vortigern*, had he aided me in writing it, he  
 certainly

certainly would not disclaim all knowledge of its *merits, plot, or beauties*. He certainly knew the fact, and that was all; as to his joining in the story, he did it at my most earnest request, though much against his own inclination.

A committee of gentlemen was now called to inspect the manuscripts, and report what they thought concerning their authenticity; I was obliged to be present, many questions were put to me about the papers, my answer was, that I attended there only to exculpate my father from the *odium* which was heaped on him, but to answer nothing farther; I likewise offered to make oath, that my father was no ways whatever concerned; but this was over-ruled by some gentleman present. Other committees were held, in which Mr. *Talbot's* letter was frequently read, and at one of these, a petition was drawn up, signed by the committee, stating my father's situation with the world, which I was required to deliver to my friend, when alone, I determined rather than he should undergo so much un-

merited blame, that I would myself come forward with the truth.

I therefore, at the next meeting, said, that the person from whom I had the papers would reveal the secret to any two gentlemen of respectability, for that purpose a list was made, which I was to shew my friend, those names which he did not approve he was to blot out, but any two of those he left standing, and who would receive the secret, to them he would communicate it.

At the next meeting I delivered the list, having only marked out the names of a few who had been sanguine in their belief of the papers, not liking to hurt their feelings, but of those gentlemen whose names I left standing, some were out of town, and others did not choose to undertake the embassy.

It having been observed by me, as before stated, that the gentleman was under apprehensions for his situation should the truth be known, and some one of the committee suggesting

gesting that he ought to apply for legal advice in the business, where he might with safety communicate the affair, I went myself to Mr. *Wallis*, and told him nearly this story, under a strict injunction of secrecy, at the same time giving him in writing a short account of the principal matters herein contained, which I wrote before him, as well in the old hand as my own; he likewise put several questions to me, as to the reasons which lead me to attempt so many different things, which I immediately answered in writing; it is now five Months since, and on comparing the reasons given in this account, with those left in his hands, they are found to coincide; and to which I refer any person who desires to be satisfied.

Still the world accused my father of being a party concerned;——This was frequently mentioned, which rendered him unhappy: He wrote to Mr. *Talbot* to know if he would make affidavit to the truth of the story, Mr. *T*—— answered, that if *if I would join with him* he then would make oath, that  
no



no one, except us two, and a third person, knew the secret ; this he did, well assured, that I could not enter into any such affidavit, there being no third person at all concern'd ; on my refusal, my father of course, laid all the blame on me ; and to prove what I have asserted, Mr. *Talbot* has several times been requested to make the oath alone, but will not consent.

My father left town during his absence, I form'd the resolution of quitting the house, as I could not tell the truth, and live with him after to be a witness of his unhappiness ; besides, he complained of the secret being told to another person, and not himself ; I therefore put my part in execution—As a proof of my father's feelings at that time, I insert the following letter which he sent me ; those who peruse it may conceive a father's anxiety, and my embarrassed situation.

“ It is now more than a week, my dear  
 “ *Sam*, since I left *London*, and not a word  
 “ or

“ or a line from you ; in the situation, unsettled as you are, you cannot suppose but that my mind is much agitated, both on your account and that of the family.—

“ I expected, according to your promise, that you would certainly have written to me and have pointed out what was your plan :——And not only so, but your intentions with regard to the papers. I do assure you, my state is truly wretched on both accounts ; I have no rest either night or day, which might be much alleviated by a more open and candid conduct on your side ; surely, if there is a person for whom you can for a moment feel, it must be for a parent, who has never ceased to render you every comfort and attention from your earliest moment of existence to the present.—I think you must sometimes reflect, and place yourself in your imagination as at a future period of life, having a son, and being in such a predicament as I stand at present, and then judging what must *be your state of mind*, and what must *be mine at present*.

“ I do not mean reproaches by this letter,  
 “ but to assure you, that if you cannot think  
 “ me your friend, I fear you will be deceived  
 “ in all friendships you may in future form. I  
 “ do not recollect that any conduct of mine  
 “ toward you, has been other than that of a  
 “ friend and companion, not that of a rigid or  
 “ remorse parent? It is therefore doubly  
 “ unnatural, that I should be found to ap-  
 “ ply for information through any channel  
 “ whatever, when I ought to hear it vo-  
 “ luntarily from yourself. You seem to be  
 “ estranging yourself, not only from me, but  
 “ from all your family, and all my acquaint-  
 “ ances. Reflect well what you do, and what  
 “ determinations you make, for this is the  
 “ moment that may, in all probability render  
 “ you comfortable in your future establish-  
 “ ment, and future situation, or make you an  
 “ alien to happiness for ever. I have heard  
 “ of my situation with the world, as to the  
 “ papers, at *Reading*, from many gentlemen  
 “ there, who all agree, that my state is truly  
 “ a pitiable one, and all seem to dread the  
 “ event; I know not the nature of your  
 “ oaths and engagements, nor does the world;  
 “ but

“ but it is universally allowed, that no ob-  
 “ ligation should lead a parent into ruin.—  
 “ If the papers are to be established as ge-  
 “ nuine, why delay to furnish me with the  
 “ documents so lately promised ? But I will  
 “ say no more on the subject at present.—By  
 “ a paragraph in the *Sun* of *Thursday* last,  
 “ it should appear, that though I am not in  
 “ the secret, some persons are.” The pa-  
 ragraph runs thus——“ We are at length  
 “ enabled to form a *decisive opinion* with re-  
 “ gard to the *Manuscripts* in the possession  
 “ of Mr. *Ireland*, though motives of delicacy  
 “ at present prevent us from rendering that  
 “ opinion publick” ! Pray me give a line by  
 “ to-morrow’s post, as I am impatient to hear  
 “ from you, and believe me your very sincere  
 “ friend, and affectoinate father,”

*Samuel Ireland.*

*June 5, Sunday.*

I then ask'd Mr. *Wallis* what I could do to exonerate my father ; he drew up a paper which I sign'd, and have here inserted.

In justice to my father, and to remove the *odium* under which he labours respecting the papers published by him as the manuscripts of *Shakspeare*, I do hereby solemnly declare, that they were given to him by me as the manuscripts of *Shakspeare*, and that he was totally ignorant and unacquainted with the source from whence they came, or with any matter relating to the same, or to any thing save what was told him by himself ; and that he published them without any knowledge, or even the smallest intention of fraud or imposition, but under a firm belief and persuasion of their authenticity, as I had given him to understand they were so.

*W. H. Ireland.*

17 January, 1796.



Still my father was dissatisfied ; nor would the world believe that he was not concern'd in the business.—I afterwards wrote him a letter, confessing, that I was really the author, of which I kept no copy, or should undoubtedly have here inserted it—This proved as ineffectual as any thing I before had done, for he still thought *Shakspear* the author of the papers, and me totally incapable of writing them.—

I shall insert a message left in writing with Mr. *Wallis*, which still goes to prove my father a stranger to the whole affair.—

“ That I insist on having the affidavit  
 “ drawn up by *Sam*, and sign'd and sworn  
 “ before a magistrate, in order to its being  
 “ sent to *Talbot*, and then to be laid before  
 “ the public, and I likewise insist on having  
 “ the remainder of the papers so often pro-  
 “ mised me.”

The papers which my father here alludes to, and of which he has a list, were those

which I intended to have written, had not the business taken such a turn as it has done.

I here introduce a speech, the original of which, with my various alterations, was delivered, with many other things, to the care of Mr. *Wallis*, leaving the world to judge of its merits if it possesses any.

*On contemplating Westminster Abbey.*

“ O ! my good lord how irksome passed the  
“ time,

“ While in yon porch I did wait your coming;

“ Yet as this chrystal arch, this bright heaven

“ Doth shine upon the emeral tipped wave,

“ And paints upon the deep each passing

“ cloud;

“ E’en so the smallest and most gentle plant

“ That waves before the breath of thee sweet

“ heaven,

“ To man gives food for contemplation ;

“ And

“ And shows how soon this blazing frame of  
 “ youth  
 “ Must sink on Age’s chilling icy bed,  
 “ And dwindle down to second nothingness ;  
 “ Look but on yon clock those lanky fingers,  
 “ The toiling heralds of swift winged time,  
 “ Whose clapper wakens men from drowsy  
 “ sleep ;  
 “ Changing the dreary stillness of black night  
 “ To days first infancy, the blushing morn ;  
 “ While blest *Aurora* rears her purple crest,  
 “ And tip-toe stands, shaking her golden hair,  
 “ Eager to visit the busy sons of men :  
 “ Her blazing journey ended, down she sinks,  
 “ And so I liken her to man’s strange end.  
 “ Look on yon pile, under whose fretted roof,  
 “ So many kings have seized the precious  
 “ gem  
 “ Of royalty, and sucked the courtiers  
 “ Lip laboured lies.  
 “ Where are ye now, dead alas and rotten ;  
 “ O ! my good lord, let us from hence away,  
 “ This spot doth smell too strong of royal  
 “ dust

“ Throwing its lures to catch the minds of  
 “ men ;  
 “ Blowing in their ears the feverous blast  
 “ Of mirths, feasts, merriment, prosperity ;  
 “ Till on a sudden grappling with their souls,  
 “ Thou knittest them at once in death *eterne*.”

This speech I meant to have introduced in a play taken from the life of *William* the Conqueror ; it was to have been spoke by Earl *Edwyn* ; who conspired against him in consequence of his tyrannical government : he was to wait near the Abbey in disguise, for *Marcarus* another conspirator, and there make this speech—The plan of this play, as well as several others from *English* history, I have lately deposited with Mr. *Wallis*, together with many other things relating to this business, where they may be inspected by those whose curiosity may lead them to require that satisfaction.

On *Thursday* the 17th of *November* I wrote the following letter to Mr. *Talbot*.

Dr.

Dr. Montague,

“ The various things which have passed  
“ since I last wrote to you cannot be here  
“ repeated,—I only beg you will say nothing  
“ more about the papers, nor take any trou-  
“ ble in explaining the business to my father.  
“ I find it necessary to keep the world no  
“ longer in suspense, and am preparing a  
“ circumstantial account of the whole, where-  
“ in I shall inform them of the truth, *that I*  
“ *am the Author*; be assured I will excuse  
“ you in every point for what you have said  
“ concerning their authenticity, and take it  
“ all upon myself,—you may suppose what I  
“ have undergone to bring me to such a  
“ confession, after what passed between us,  
“ but I find that truth will always prevail.

I remain your's ever,

*W. H. Ireland.*

That the world may not suppose any thing  
lurks behind, this expression in my letter  
(after what passed between us) I shall ex-  
plain.



plain its meaning—On Mr. *Talbot's* quitting me, I made him a promise, that I would not tell the business on any account, unless he was willing, which promise I have not faithfully observed, this I hope will be excused, as my peculiar situation alone caused the breach of it.—

Before I conclude, I shall sum up this account, and am willing to make affidavit to the following declarations, as well as to the whole of this narration.

*First*, I solemnly declare that my father was perfectly unacquainted with the whole affair, believing the papers most firmly the production of *Shakspeare*.

*Secondly*,—That I am myself both the author and writer, and have had no aid or assistance from any soul living, and that I should never have gone so far, but that the world praised the papers so much, and thereby flattered my vanity.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*,—That any publication which may appear tending to prove the manuscripts genuine, or contradict what is here *stated*, is false ; this being the true account.

*W. H. Ireland.*

Here then I conclude, most sincerely regretting any offence I may have given the world, or any particular individual, trusting at the same time, they will deem the whole the act of a boy, without any evil or bad intention, but hurried on thoughtless of any danger that awaited to ensnare him.

Should I attempt another play, or any other stage performance, I shall hope the public will lay aside all prejudice my conduct may have deserved, and grant me that kind indulgence which is the certain inmate of every *Englishman's* bosom.



















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